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CONSIDERATIONS OF Present Use, Concerning the DANGER Resulting from the CHANGE OF OUR CHURCH-GOVERNMENT.

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TO him that being satisfied in judgment of the *lawfulness* of *Episcopal Government*, doth yet conceive that the parting with it is no *change* of *Religion*, and consequently, that the standing for it at this time, when it is oppoſed, is but the preferring the intereſts of ſome inconſiderable men before the conveniences and common Wiſhes of all, I earneſtly deſire (in the Bowels of Compaſſion to my bleeding Country, and from a ſincere Paſſionate wiſh that the *cure* of this dange-

rous wound may not be an *imperfect cure*) to present some few sad considerations, which I shall cast under two heads (proportionable to the two parts of the former ungrounded suggestion) the one, *That parting with the present Government is no change of Religion*; the other, *That standing for it at this time, is the preferring the interests of some before the common wish of all*, the peace of this Nation.

Concerning the former, I offer to consideration, First, whether the *Government* of the Church be not a considerable part of *Religion*? That it is so, I shall make appear by these Reasons. 1. That *Government* is as necessary to the *preservation* of the Church as *Preaching* the Gospel was to the *Plantation* of it, and that therefore it was always the Apostles practice, as soon as ever they had converted a City or Province, or any considerable number of Men in it, to leave it in the hands of some faithful Persons, to *dress*, *tend*, and *water*, what they had thus *planted*; and therefore though it were *possible* for a *Christian* to be deprived of this benefit, and yet to remain *Christian* (as to *want* some limbs, or to *abound* to monstrosity in others, is yet reconcileable with *life* and *being* of a Man) to retain the *doctrine* of Christianity without any *Government*, to be a Christian in the Wall or in the Wilderness, a *Stylita* or *Anachorite* Christian (in which case there is no doubt the *use* of the very *Sacraments*, Instituted by Christ himself, would not be

necessary

necessary to *Christianity*) yet would it be little less than fury for any to design or hope the *prosperity* or *duration* of a Church, or visible society of such Christians, without this grand *necessary* (though not of *single being*, yet) of *mutual preservation*, this *principle* not of *essence* but of *continuance*, without which (it is the learned *Breerewood's* observation from St. *Augustine*) that the preservation of a *Church* was once by *experience* found to be an *impossible* thing, no other engine being able to repair the Want or Supply the *place* of that.

A second reason may be drawn from the concurring *pleas* of all the most distant *pretenders* for the several Forms of Government in the *Church*, as well those that have espoused the *Papal*, the *Presbyterial*, the *Independent*, as those which are for the present *English* Form by *the King and his Bishops*, &c. all vehemently contending for the necessity of that Government, which they affect in the Church, and none so calm or modest in their claims, as the Asserters of the English Prelacy; which moderation or want of heat, is sure one reason that so many Sons of this Church are now tempted to think Government so *unconsiderable* a thing, and so *extrinsecal* to Christianity; though this thought thus grounded, be a double injustice, 1. In suspecting that *truth*, for want of *asserting*, which is therefore not so vehemently *asserted*, because it is supposed *truth*, 2. In encouraging *heat* and *violence* of disputes (the greatest plague in a Church) by

shewing them, that the *Eagerest* pretenders shall be most *heeded*, and that *meekness shall not inherit the earth*, though both *David* and *Christ* promised it should. A third argument may be had from the judgment of our *State*, which hath thought fit to make the *Government* of the Church matter of one of the *Articles of our Religion*, and so to joyn in honour the care of it with the care of the *Doctrine*, and to require as strict a *subscription* to the establish't *Government*, as to the rest of the 39. heads of *Doctrine*, by which you may evidently see, that to change the *Government* is to change the *Doctrine*, and where Doctrine and Government both are changed, can we possibly think the Religion to be the same? I shall add no more *Proofs* of this, because I conceive them *unnecessary*; the contrary misapprehension being, as I suppose, not grounded by *Arguments*, but of its own accord arising from ἀπειρία *an experiment*, which many men, especially *persons of quality*, think they have made, that in their whole lives they never reaped any benefit from *Government*, never received any accession or encrease to their spiritual weal from that, as from the *Doctrine* and *Liturgy* of the Church, they acknowledg to have done. To this ground of misprision, as being perhaps the τὸ αἴτιον τῆς ἀγνοίας the cause of the whole mistake, it will not be amiss to make some answer.

1. That many benefits we receive from *Government*,

them, which we do not *visibly discern*, and that therefore, when we *discern* our selves to have received some growth, and cannot but know that it was wrought by *means*, we should rather confess our want of *sense* or gratitude to the *true means*, than imagine those not to have been the *means*, only because we have not that *sense* of them.

2. That those means which have been more *visible* to us, the dispensation of the Word and Sacraments, have been reached out to us by the hand of *Government*, to which therefore we owe our acknowledgments in the second place for our *preservation* and *growth*, as to the hand of supreme providence for our *being* or *life* spiritual.

3. That if the *benefits of Government* have not been really very *discernable* and *notable* to all, that is not yet in any justice to be imputed to any *defect* that way in Government it self, to any *barrennes* in the nature or particular temper of it, but to some *default* (which will deserve observing and reforming) in the *Persons*, either of the *Rulers*, or of *those* which are *under rule*, or of a third sort whose duti it is to be the Rulers *Perspectives* and *Otacoustichs*, to present to their knowledg, the wants of inferiours, which till they are *known*, are not likely to be *repaired*. The defaults in each of these severals are, or may be,

be ſo many, and ſo obnoxious to common obſervation, that it will be much more reaſonable for each to reſolve to *amend* his part for the future, and ſo make it a buſineſs of *Reformation*, than to charge the defaults of Perſons to the defaming of Government, and ſo to *undervalue* and *ſcorn* what our ſins firſt, then our phanſies have *defamed*.

The comfort is, that it hath been the *clemency* as well as the *ſloth* or *coldneſs* of Governours, which have deprived men of the great fruits of Government; and if it may be agreed that it is very expedient, and will be taken in good part, that Governours hereafter be more *ſevere*, as well as more *diligent*, more *courageous*, as well as more *laborious*, in uſing the *Weapons of their warfare*, to *cut* off or to *cure*, without any reſpect of perſons, whereſoever there is need of them; I ſhall hope this objection will *then* be throughly Anſwered, if as *yet* it be not.

A ſecond conſideration apportioned to the former head will be this, whether (ſuppoſing Government of the Church to be a conſiderable part of Religion) the change of it from Eſtabliſhed Epiſcopacy to any other (namely to that of *Presbytery* by many, without any *Superiour* over them, or as that is oppoſite to *Epiſcopacy*) be not a ſin againſt *Religion*? That it is, or will be ſo, I ſhall endeavour to convince the *gainſayer* by theſe ſteps

or

or degrees of proof, which though perhaps not each ſingle, yet all being put together will, I believe, where *prejudice* doth not hinder, be ſufficient to doe it.

1. Becauſe this Government by *Biſhops*, ſuperiour to *Presbyters*, is of *Apoſtolical Inſtitution.* But this being an affirmation, as demonſtrable by Eccleſiaſtical Records, as any thing can be, or as the Canon of Scripture which we receive, is demonſtrated to be the Canon of Scripture; and in regard it hath by others been ſufficiently proved, I ſhall therefore wholly ſpare the repeating of that trouble, and add unto it. 2. That it hath the *example*, though not the diſtinct precept of Chriſt, who with his twelve *Apoſtles*, and the many other *Diſciples* in time of his reſidence upon Earth, ſuperiour one to the other, are the copy, of which the *Biſhops*, *Presbyters* and *Deacons* in the following Age, were a tranſcript, who are therefore by St. *Ignatius*, S. *Johns Contemporary*, allowed to receive honour, *the Biſhops* as *Chriſt*, the *Presbyters* as the *Apoſtles*, the *Deacons* as the *Seventy*. 3. That as far as concerns *ſuperiority* of one order to the other (which is ſufficient to eject the Presbytery which ſuppoſes an *identity* or *equality* of all) it is Authorized by ſacred Scripture-practiſe, where it appears, that when *Judas* fell from his orbe of motion, the *dignity* of being one of the Twelve, is by the direction of the Spirit, and by lot beſtowed upon *Matthias*, who, though before a Diſciple of Chriſt, *Acts* 1.

Christ, was not till then assumed to that *dignity*. Fourthly, that supposing it to be in this manner *Apostolical*, there is little colour of reason to doubt, but that the preserving of it is of as great moment as many *Doctrines* of Christianity, not only because many *doctrines* were not so *explicitely* delivered by Christ, but that they needed farther *explicating* by the *Apostles*, (and are therefore by the Church grounded not in any words of the *Gospel*, but in the *Epistles* of the *Apostles*) but also because it was in Gods *providence* thought fit, that *Government* should be setled not by *Christ personally*, but by the Apostles, that is *mediately* by Christ; as doctrine was by Christ *immediately*. Christ in his life time gives them the ground of a Church, divine truth, the *word of his Father*, the acknowledgment of which is *the rock on which his Church is built*, on this the Apostles are to build, and gather members, and to settle the whole edifice κατὰ τάξιν or *ordinately*, and that they may not err in that work, the *Holy Ghost* is promised to *descend* upon them, and Christ by that power of his to be with them in eminent manner, εἰς συντέλειαν *to the end of the world*. And *Government* being necessary to the setling, was undoubtedly thus referred and left to them by CHRIST, and so their Authority in instituting that which they instituted, as evidently deduced from CHRIST, as their power of *Preaching* what they preached, or *baptising* whom they baptised. And having gone thus far, I cannot but resume my *consideration*

ration thus far made more *considerable*, and appeal to any sober conscience, whether it be not some irreligion thus to displace or remove that which the Apostles (to whom only by Christ it was intrusted) according to Christs own Samplar and Scripture-grounds, thought fit to settle in the Church, supposing it to be a matter of Religion which is spoken of, as before we proved; nay, whether if an *Angel from Heaven* were to be *anathematized for teaching any other Doctrine than what* one Apostle had taught, it would not be matter of just *terrour* to any that should have any part in the guilt of instituting any other Government than that which the Apostles had instituted, especially when the acts of *Councels* tell us, that what S. *Paul* denounces against the *heterodox* Angel, the Church did practise against *Aerius*, anathematized him for impugning this Government, which now we speak of. And if still the Authority of all this be blemisht by this one *exception*, that this institution of the Apostles is not affirmed in *Scripture*, or there commanded to posterity to *continue*, and retain for ever.

To this I answer, by saying that which may be a fourth Argument to prove the irreligiousness of such change, That there is as much or more to be said (in both those respects, both for *mention* of this *institution in Scripture*, and for *Apostolical precept for continuing* of it) for this *Government*, as for some other things whose chang would be acknowledged

knowledged very irreligious. I will only instance in one, the Institution of the *Lords day*, of which there is nothing can be said to the setting up the *Authority* and *immutability* of it, which will not be said of *Episcopacy*. A *ground* of it there was *in nature*, some *Time* to be set a part to the special publick service of God; and the like *ground* there *is in nature* for this, that some *Persons* should be designed to, and rewarded for the special publick service of God. A *pattern* of that there was among the *Jews*, one day in the seven designed for Gods *Quotum* or portion; the like *pattern* there is among the *Jews* for this, a Government by *High-Priests*, and *Levites*. That was an Institution not of *Christ* in his life time immediately, but of his *Apostles*, after his departure invested with such power; the like Institution there is of this by the same *Apostles* after Christs Ascension, directed and assisted by the *holy Ghost*. The *occasion* of pitching on the first day of the week was a solemn action of Christ his *Resurrection* on that day; the *occasion* of this, the several distinct orders in the Church in Christs time, *Christs Apostles*, *Disciples*, and the manifest superiority of him before all of them (who affirms himself their *Lord*, even when he speaks of his office Ministerial, his *coming to Minister to them*) and of the *Apostles* before the *Disciples*, as even now was shewed. The mention of that was found once in the *Revelation* distinctly, *viz. in the Lords day*, and twice or thrice in equipollent terms, *the first day of the week*; and the mention of Episcopacy is as clear,

the Angel of the Church of Ephesus, &c. in the *Revelation* (which hath been cleared by irrefragable evidence to belong to this matter) and the *Ruling Elder* in S. *Paul*, that must have *double honour*, and *Titus left in Crete to set in order the things that were wanting, and to ordain Elders in every Church*; and many other more clear mentions of the several titles and officies of *Bishop*, *Presbyter*, and *Deacon*, than there is of the name and duties of the *Lords day*. The *obscure mentions* of that in Scripture were *explained* in the writings and Stories of the first age of the Church, particularly in the *Epistles* of *Ignatius*, and the *obscurities* of the Sacred Texes concerning *Episcopacy*, are as clearly *explicated* and unfolded by the same *Ignatius* even in every one of those *Epistles* of his which *Vedelius* (as great an enemy of this Order as *Geneva* hath produced any) after his *fiery tryal* of that Author hath acknowledged to be his. *The use* of that continued from the *Apostles* time (though not universally till the *Jewish Sabbath* was fairly laid a sleep) till these days in the *universal Church*, and all *particular Churches*, that we read of; and the like use and practise of this continued *universall* without any exception from the *Apostles* time, till this day in the *universall Church*, as that signifies the *Eastern* and the *Western* Church, and in each particular Church, till about this last *Century*, and in this of ours from the plantation of the Gospel till this day. Those are paralleles enough to even the ballance (and I profess to know no one more which might

weigh it down on that side) and to make it now seasonable to demand, whether it would not be thought an act contrary to Religion (whether that signifies Christian *Piety*, or *meekness*, or *awe*, to all that is *Sacred*) for any particular National Church or part thereof, without any more warrant then is now offered for this present change, to remove the service of God from the *Lords day* to any other day in the week, (which sure is as small a difference, as that betwixt *Presbyterial* and *Episcopal* Government can by any be conceived to be) or instead of our *first day* of the week to set apart either an *eight*, or a *sixt* day, and so to change that *Apostolical institution*. If *that* seem strange, or be startled at, as unfit to be ventured on, or yielded to, I shall desire the same plea may be entred for *this*, and that conscience may be secured, that either both are lawfull, or that the difference is clear, and the advantage on the *Lords days* side, or that it may be resolved that *this* is unlawfull as well as *that*.

A fift Argument will be this, That the making (or yielding to) this change, will be a scandal very worthy to be considered in them that so *yield*, toward those which *oppose* this Government as unlawfull: for this yielding will be an appearing acknowledgement that their contrary Pretentions are true, and so a confirming them in their *errour* (which is no light one, but the same for which *Aerius* was, and any other apposer would certainly have been, anathematized, and turned out of the

Catholick Church for an *Heretick*,) which is one ſpecial kind of *Scandalizing* or occaſioning the fall of our Brethren, and withall a nouriſhing them in their *uncharitable opinion* not only of us, but of the ancient Fathers of the Church, (who were all *Antichriſtian* if this be ſo) which is another *cauſing my Brother to offend*: nay a kind of countenancing that *unchriſtian* (am ſure *unproteſtant*) *Doctrine*, of the lawfulneſs of *taking up Arms*, againſt lawfull Superiours and Eſtabliſht Lawes, and propagating our opinions in Religion by that means, which perchance ſome may be betrayed to by this *example*, others brought to believe conſentaneous to *Proteſtant Doctrine*, if they which are thus guilty be thus gratified; which as it were a *change* in our *Doctrine*, if it were *really acknowledged*, ſo is it, in this reſpect, another act of *Scandall*, if it thus *aprear* to be *acknowledged*, and that which would make any Heathen Prince unwilling to embrace our Religion, if this diſloyal perſwaſion were conceived to be a part of it.

A ſixt Argument (which to me is of no ſmall force) I will yet but name, and refer it to others to conſider of, That no man is a Prieſt, or lawfully ordained Miniſter of any Chriſtian Church, but he that is *called* and *ſent* by *God*; that there is now no way in this Kingdome, to have that *calling* or *miſſion* duly but from *Biſhops*, who are the only perſons who have their power of Ordaining others, *given* to them in their aſſumption to that Order by thoſe who had

had it before, and can drive it from the *Apostles*, who had it *immediatly* from *Heaven*: and whatsoever other power a *Priest* or *Presbyter* may be thought or said to have common with a Bishop, it is yet the constant judgment of the universal Church for 1500. years, that this of Ordination is not competible to one or more *bare Presbyters* without a *Bishop*, and it will be easie to satisfie any reasonable man in whatsoever may be produced of sound, or probability to the contrary: and therefore if any Office, or Order, or Ministry in the Church be considerable, this which is the standing well-head and spring of all the other, must be thought so also.

Having premised these Arguments of so much weight, sufficient to support the burthen designed to them, I shall add, *ex abundante* some inferior ones (though they amount not so far, as alone of themselves to conclude it direct irreligion, yet to add to the former heap some aggravations. As,

1. That to yield to this change, is to *disclaim* those blessed means of Gods *providence* which brought us to our Baptisme, to all our spiritual life and growth that we have attained to, and that is a great ingratitude to that Government.

2. It is an act of *pride* and *insolency*, to prefer any scheme of *humane* and *modern* invention before that which the *Apostles*, the *Primitive*, and

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(for ſo many years) the *Univerſal Church* had authorized, and therefore I could almoſt adventure to believe, that the framers of the *Covenant* had obliged themſelves ſecretly to maintain Epiſcopacy by putting in thoſe words, [*the beſt Reformed Churches*] that I might eſcape thinking them ſo *inſolent* as to prefer any Churches before thoſe, which they cannot but know have uſed *Epiſcopacy*.

3. It is a great *tempting of Gods providence*, in not being contented with that Form which hath proſpered ſo happily with us, and the whole Chriſtian World, (though ſubject (as all that is humane, or mixt with fleſh, is even the very grace of God in us) to be abuſed) any putting it to the adventure, whatſoever inconveniences the next may be ſubject to. Of the *inconveniences* that Preſbytery doth infallibly bring along with it, and the *unreconcilableneſs* of them with *Monarchical Government* in the State, ſufficient evidences have been given; and if there were no other but this, that the endeavouring to bring it in at this time hath brought this tempeſt and *wind* upon this Kingdom, and that this hath been but the general conſequent of that Government, whereſoever it hath but begun to heave, caſting out Peace, and obedience to lawful Authority together, it would well deſerve to have this mark of reprobation or non-election ſet upon it, if it were but for this, that the proſperity of ſuch attempts ſhould not encourage others to the like. This and the

the like inconveniences are of ſuch weight, that for men to be willing to exchange the *certain* benefits of the one, for the *uncertain* advantages and ſtrongly probable calamities of the other is a ſin, that may *provoke* and *tempt* God to puniſh them yet further with greater and unexpected curſes, and therefore may deſerve in 'its place to be conſidered.

4. It is an act of *infidelity* and practical *Atheiſme* for thoſe eſpecially who being convinced with the former reaſons to acknowledg any irreligion or ſin in ſuch change) to ſacrifice any thing to our own preſent conveniences, to make any change in ſacred matters meerly out of intuition of our own ſecular advantages; *Atheiſme*, in thinking that God cannot as eaſily blaſt that convenience ſo acquired, as thoſe many which came more directly to our hands; and *infidelity*, or *diſtruſt*, in thinking that God will not in his time give thoſe conveniences and advantages (if they be ſuch indeed) by means perfectly *lawful*, which now we covet by *unlawful*. To which might be added the wants and omiſſions of thoſe duties of *confeſſion of Chriſt*, in not defending and ſtanding to thoſe truths which we are convinced to be ſuch, in time of their being oppugned and perſecuted; *ſelf-denial*, in not depoſiting our own carnal ſecular aims and intereſts, and *of taking up the Croſs*, in not ſuffering willingly and cheerfully when it lies in our way to the preforming of any act of obedence

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o Christ. But I would not inlarge to these, but nly conclude this proof with a fift *difficulty* of separating *sin* from *changes*, when they are great, and in matters of weight: It is the wise mans advice that occasioned this observation, *My Son, fear thou the Lord and the King, and meddle not with them which are given to changes*: The changes are sure changes in Government, and those are named indefinitely, without any *restraint*, and the very *medling* with them *that are inclined* to such, is opposed both to Piety and Loyalty, *Fearing of God and the King*.

I have done with the considerations proportioned to the first part of the suggestion. I proceed to the view of the second part of it, and there the consideration shall be only this, whether,

The change of this Government, be not a *common interest of all*, as well as of those who are *now Clergy-men*. That it is so, may appear probable, because the *revenue or honours* which belong to them in Government are not the sole, or main part of *Government*; there is a *weight* and *office*, which our forefathers thought worthy to be *encouraged* and *rewarded* with those payments, and if any man shall think them ill proportioned, I shall not doubt to tell him *S. Chrisostomes* judgment, *that the burthen of a Bishop was formidable, even to an Angell to undergo*, and if the corruptions of latter times be affirmed to have changed that state of things, I

anſwer: that the reſtoring Epiſcopacy to its due *burthen* as well as *reputation*, were a care worthy of reformers, and it is ſo far from my deſire that any ſuch care ſhould be ſpared, that it is now my publick ſolemn Petition both to God and Man, that the *power of the keys*, and the exerciſe of that power, the due uſe of *confirmation*, and (previous to that) examination, and tryall of youth, a ſtrict ſearch into the manners and tempers, and ſufficiencies of thoſe that are to be admitted into holy *Orders*, and to be licentiate for *publick Preachers*, the *viſitation* of each Pariſh in each Dioceſs, and the exerciſe of Church-diſcipline upon all offenders; together with *painfull*, mature and ſober *Preaching* and *Catechizing*, ſtudies of all kinds, and parts of Theological Learning, Languages, Controverſies, Writings of the Schools and Caſuiſts, *&c.* be ſo far taken into conſideration by our Law-makers and ſo far conſidered in the collating of Church-preferments and dignities, ſo much of Duty required of Clergie-men, and ſo little left *arbitrary* or *at large*, that every Church-*preferment* in this Kingdom may have ſuch a due *burthen* annexed to it, that no *ignorant* perſon ſhould be *able*, no *lazy* or *luxurious* perſon *willing* or *forward* to undergoe it. And if this might be thus deſigned, I ſhould then reſolve, that the direct contrary to the fore-mentioned ſuggeſtions would be truth, that the ſetling and continuing of this preſent *Government* would prove the *common intereſt* of all, and only the *burthen* of thoſe *few* that have thoſe painfull offices aſſigned them;

them; and least any may think this word a *boast* (which I can safely venture with the world at this time, and not have reason to fear a *surprisal*, or being taken at my word) I shall venture another offer in the name of my brethern of the Clergy? (not that I have took their particular Votes, but that I perswade my self so far of their Piety.) That rather than the *Glory* should thus *depart from Israel*, by the Philistines *taking the Ark of the Lord*, laying wast this flourishing Church of ours, or transforming it into a new guise, every one single of us, that have any possessions or titles worthy any mans envy or rapine, and so are thought now by our own interests to have been bribed or fee'd Advocates in this cause, may forthwith be deprived of all that part of the Revenues of the Church wherein we are legally invested; and he that shall not cheerfully relinquish his part in the *present* prosperity of the Church, on the meer contemplation and intuition of the *benefit* that may now, and *after his life* redound to *others*, let him have the guilt of *Achans wedge* laid on him, and the charge of being disturber of the State. I hope we have *learnt* to *want as well as to abound* and to trust God (that can *feed* the *young Ravens* when the old have exposed them) for the feeding of us, and our families, though all our present means of doing it were taken from us. If this may serve turne to satisfie the *thirst* of those that *gape*, and the suspicions of those that *look unkindly* on us, we offer to free you from all blame of *Sacriledg*, or *oppression*,

or *injuſtice* (from one of which, no other means imaginable can free a *change* of Government by our own voluntary *Ceſſion* or *reſignation*, as far as our perſonal intereſts reach:) and ſhall think the Peace of this State, and continued proſperity of this Church, a moſt *glorious* purchaſe, moſt *cheaply* bought, if it be had upon ſuch terms as theſe. And if the Function it ſelf, with the neceſſary adjuncts to it, be not ſwept away in the calamity, we ſhall be perfectly pleaſed whatſoever befall our *Perſons*, and deſire, that try all may be made of the *Ingenuity* of Clergy-men, whether we have not thus far *profited* under *Gods rod*, as to be willing to yield to any poſſible propoſition (which will bring no guilt of ſin upon our conſciences) towards the averting the judgments of Heaven, which are now (I wiſh I might ſay *for our ſins only*) moſt ſadly multiplyed upon this Land.

FINIS.

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